



Clean Set of Pending Claims
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/679,093

1. A gaming machine having a processor monitoring real time, comprising:
 - a basic game controlled by said processor in response to a wager amount and including basic game visual elements, said basic game having a plurality of start-bonus outcomes;
 - a bonus game controlled by said processor and activated by the occurrence of one of said plurality of start-bonus outcomes, said bonus game including bonus game visual elements displayed while said bonus game is activated; and
 - a memory device coupled to said processor and storing at least two basic game data sets for producing at least two different types of said basic game visual elements and at least two bonus game data sets for producing at least two different types of said bonus game visual elements, said processor selecting one of said at least two basic game data sets and one of said at least two bonus game data sets in response to said real time being a predetermined time.
2. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said basic game includes a simulated spinning reel display showing a plurality of symbols, said basic game visual elements including at least some of said plurality of symbols.
3. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said bonus game visual elements include a plurality of non-selectable symbols that are independent of a bonus payout from said bonus game.
4. The gaming machine of claim 3, wherein said plurality of non-selectable symbols are background visual elements.
5. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said bonus game visual elements include a plurality of selectable symbols, said bonus game including a chance for a bonus payout dependent on said plurality of selectable symbols.

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6. The gaming machine of claim 5, wherein said plurality of selectable symbols are selected by a game player on a keyboard.
7. The gaming machine of claim 5, wherein said plurality of selectable symbols are selected by said game player via a touch screen.
8. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said predetermined time is at least one day in a calendar year.
9. The gaming machine of claim 8, wherein said at least one day is a holiday.
10. The gaming machine of claim 9, wherein said holiday is selected from a group consisting of Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Mardi Gras, Easter, the 4th of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day.
11. The gaming machine of claim 8, wherein said at least one day is a holiday and at least one day before and after said holiday.
12. The gaming machine of claim 8, wherein one of said at least two different types of said bonus game or basic game visual elements includes animated characters having visual indicia of a holiday motif.
13. The gaming machine of claim 12, wherein said characters are animated so as to provide movement.
14. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said predetermined time is at least one minute within one day.
15. The gaming machine of claim 14, wherein said at least one minute includes a plurality of minutes during the nighttime, and one of said at least two different types of said bonus game or basic game visual elements includes characters appearing to be physically exhausted.

16. The gaming machine of claim 15, wherein said characters are animated so as to provide movement.

17. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said predetermined time is a particular day, and one of said at least two different types of said bonus game or basic game visual elements includes a trivia fact associated with said particular day from a previous year.

18. The gaming machine of claim 17, wherein said predetermined time is a plurality of times within said particular day, and a different trivia fact is displayed at each of said plurality of times.

19. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said processor selects one of said at least two basic game data sets and one of said at least two bonus game data sets for display after a player has finished a gaming session if said predetermined time occurs during said gaming session.

20. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said bonus game visual elements are also displayed while said bonus game is inactive.

21. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said predetermined time is determined, in part, due to a clock that is internal to said processor.

22. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said memory device further includes at least two audio data sets for producing at least two different types of audio elements, said processor selecting one of said at least two audio data sets in response to the occurrence of said predetermined time that is monitored by said processor.

23. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said predetermined time is a day of the calendar year, and one of said at least two different types of said bonus game visual elements includes visual features representative of a season, wherein said season is selected from the group consisting of spring, summer, fall, and winter.

24. The gaming machine of claim 1, further including a display for displaying said visual elements, said display being selected from the group consisting of dot matrix, CRT, LED, LCD, and electro-luminescent displays.

25. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said gaming machine is selected from the group consisting of a stand-up slot machine, a sit-down slot machine, a video blackjack machine, and a video poker machine.

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26. (Amended) A gaming machine, comprising:

a processor for randomly selecting one of a plurality of outcomes of said gaming machine in response to a wager amount, said processor monitoring time signals from a clock;

a display for displaying game artwork for a wagering game; and

a memory device coupled to said processor and storing at least two data sets for producing at least two different types of said game artwork, said processor selecting one of said at least two data sets primarily in response to said processor monitoring a time signal corresponding to a predetermined time.

29. The gaming machine of claim 26, wherein said display is selected from the group consisting of dot matrix, CRT, LED, LCD, and electro-luminescent displays.

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30. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 26, wherein one of said at least two different types of game artwork has a standard motif, and another of said at least two different types of game artwork has a holiday motif.

31. The gaming machine of claim 26, further including an audio speaker for broadcasting audio elements, said memory device storing at least two audio data sets for producing at least two different types of audio elements, said processor selecting one of said at least two audio data sets in response to said processor monitoring said time signal.

32. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 26, wherein said game artwork is associated with said plurality of outcomes.

33. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 26, wherein said game artwork is unassociated with said plurality of outcomes.

34. The gaming machine of claim 26, wherein said predetermined time is at least one day in a calendar year, said at least one day being a holiday.

35. The gaming machine of claim 34, wherein said holiday is selected from a group consisting of Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Mardi Gras, Easter, the 4th of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day.

36. The gaming machine of claim 34, wherein said at least one day further includes at least one day before and after said holiday.

37. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 26, wherein said game artwork includes characters.

38. The gaming machine of claim 37, wherein said characters are animated.

39. The gaming machine of claim 26, wherein said clock is internal to said processor.

46. (Twice Amended) A method of operating a gaming machine, comprising:
displaying, on a video display, standard game artwork for a wagering game, the standard game artwork having a first theme;
monitoring real time;
automatically displaying, on the video display, modified game artwork in response to said real time being a predetermined time, said modified game artwork have a second theme different from the first theme, the second theme being indicative of a

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commonly known societal event that is associated with said predetermined time;
and
randomly selecting one of a plurality of outcomes of said gaming machine in response to
a wager amount.

47. The method of claim 46, wherein said step of monitoring real time includes monitoring a clock that is external to a processor in said gaming machine.

48. The method of claim 46, wherein said step of monitoring real time includes monitoring a clock that is internal to a processor in said gaming machine.

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49. (Amended) The method of claim 46, wherein both of said steps of displaying include the step of downloading data corresponding to said modified game artwork from a memory device.

50. The method of claim 49, wherein said steps of downloading include accessing a memory device that is external to said gaming machine.

51. The method of claim 49, wherein said steps of downloading include accessing a memory device that is internal to said gaming machine.

52. The method of claim 46, wherein said commonly known societal event is a holiday.

53. The method of claim 46, wherein said commonly known societal event is selected from a group consisting of Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Mardi Gras, Easter, the 4th of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day.

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54. (Amended) The method of claim 46, wherein said modified game artwork includes visual elements that are selectable by said player so as to result in one of a plurality of random outcomes.

86 55. (Amended) The method of claim 46, wherein said modified game artwork includes visual elements that are non-selectable by said player.

87. A gaming machine controlled by a processor in response to a wager, comprising:
a basic game including a plurality of possible randomly-selected basic outcomes, the plurality of possible basic outcomes including a start-bonus outcome, the basic game generating a basic game payout in response to winning ones of the basic outcomes, the start-bonus outcome having an average hit frequency defined as how often the start-bonus outcome occurs on average relative to the plurality of possible basic outcomes, the average hit frequency of the start-bonus outcome being automatically adjusted by the processor based on programmed criteria; and
a bonus feature triggered by the start-bonus outcome and generating a bonus.

88. The gaming machine of claim 87, wherein the basic game includes a plurality of symbol-bearing reels rotated and stopped to randomly place symbols on the reels in visual association with a viewable display area.

89. The gaming machine of claim 87, wherein the programmed criteria is time-based.

90. The gaming machine of claim 89, wherein the average hit frequency of the start-bonus outcome is automatically increased by the processor at a predetermined time.

91. The gaming machine of claim 90, wherein said predetermined time is selected from a group consisting of a certain time of day, time of month, time of year, and a particular year.

92. The gaming machine of claim 87, wherein the gaming machine has a payback percentage defined as the average percent of each wager that is returned to players in basic and bonus game payouts, the payback percentage of the gaming machine being kept substantially the same by the processor as the average hit frequency of the start-bonus outcome is automatically adjusted by the processor.

93. The gaming machine of claim 87, wherein an average value of the bonus generated by the bonus feature is adjusted by the processor to compensate for the adjustments to the average hit frequency of the start-bonus outcome such that the average value of the bonus is decreased by the processor as the average hit frequency of the start-bonus outcome is increased by the processor.

94. (New) A method of operating a gaming machine, comprising:
displaying thematic game artwork for a wagering game on a video display;
monitoring real time;
automatically altering the thematic game artwork primarily in response to the real time
being a predetermined time;
receiving a wager; and
randomly selecting at least one of a plurality of possible game outcomes.

67 95. (New) The method of claim 94, wherein the game artwork has a first theme and the altered game artwork has a second theme different from the first theme.

96. (New) The method of claim 95, wherein the second theme is indicative of a commonly known societal event that is associated with said predetermined time.

97. (New) The method of claim 95, wherein the step of monitoring real time is performed by a control system internal to the gaming machine.

98. (New) A gaming machine for conducting a wagering game, comprising:
a control system for randomly selecting one of a plurality of possible game outcomes in response to a wager amount, the control system being internal to the gaming machine and monitoring time signals;
a video display for displaying thematic game artwork; and
a memory coupled to the control system and storing a plurality of data sets for producing respective types of the thematic game artwork, the types of the thematic game artwork having different themes, the control system selecting one of the data sets

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primarily in response to the control system monitoring a time signal corresponding to a predetermined time.
